



Blyth Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Allotments Committee held in the Council Chamber at Arms Everyne House on Tuesday 2 February 2016 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillors: K Ellis (Chair), J R Potts (Vice-Chair), B Elliott, O Potts, D Rutter

Officers:

D Clough Allotments Officer
M Hawthorne Committee Clerk

Members of the Public: 13

No	
1	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Councillors: R Parker, L Rickerby. S E Rickitt, Town Clerk
2	DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND GRANTS OF DISPENSATION None.
3	MINUTES OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2015 The Minutes of the Allotment Committee Meeting held on the 6 June 2015 were AGREED by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

3.1	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>Item 5, page 5</p> <p>Amendment noted that K Newell did not make this comment.</p>
4	<p>ALLOTMENTS OFFICER'S REPORT (please see attached)</p> <p>Councillor Elliott asked the Chair if he would make sure that everyone has a chance to speak to the meeting.</p> <p>Councillor Elliott stated that he proposed to the Council almost two years ago that at least one officer attended an asbestos awareness course and asked whether this had been progressed. The Chair noted the point and confirmed that no Council staff have attended such training. Councillor J R Potts commented that even if the staff did attend asbestos awareness training, a specialist company would be used to remove asbestos from a site.</p> <p>Councillor Elliott added that he also raised the issue of water leaks on the allotments some time ago, stating that although leaks were being identified there was no way of knowing when they started. Councillor Elliott commented that the Council should know where all the stopcocks are and weekly meter readings taken.</p> <p>With regard to the complaint from the resident of Bebside House, Councillor Elliott commented that the resident doesn't own the land and queried if this is something the Council should be involved in. The Allotments Officer will clarify this.</p> <p>Plot 53 – Councillor Ellis stated that this will be dealt with in Part II of the meeting.</p> <p>Wensleydale</p> <p>Tony Raffell commented that one of the allotment holders is not adhering to the rule of keeping the gate locked. This has been brought to the attention of the Allotments Officer and he will write to the person concerned.</p>

	<p>Jack Gillis said he received notification on 6 January 2016 that the application for Newsham/New Delaval to join National Allotments Association is progressing.</p> <p>Councillor J R Potts asked for an update regarding Blyth Smallholdings. Stephen Danielson, Secretary commented that he is waiting to meet with Councillor Ellis and the Town Clerk.</p>
5	<p>THE BUDGET FOR 2016/2017 INCLUDING A POTENTIAL CONSULTATION OF FUTURE ALLOTMENT RENT (the report and appendices will be attached to the minutes)</p> <p>Questions were invited from members of the public with regard to the consultation on rent increases.</p> <p>Neville Craggs – asked if the water charge was going to be levied on those with water taps on their allotments and not those who use hoses. He suggested that allotment holders are encouraged to use water barrels. It was clarified for Mr Craggs that if someone has two gardens, they will receive a discount on 1 only.</p> <p>Gillian Newell – are the Council committed to maintaining the allotments as there will be extra money generated from the rent increases? Councillor J R Potts commented that at the last full Council meeting it was agreed that the budget will be £25,000 and that will be for general maintenance. Funding for larger problems should be funded by allotment rents. It was noted that there are issues with fences and pathways.</p> <p>Tony Raffell – raised his concern that a number of allotment holders who leave sprinklers on all day. The Chair asked that any such concerns are feedback to the Allotments Officer. The Allotments Officer said that on Wensleydale the number of taps makes it difficult to police and a suggestion was made that an alternative would be to put taps into the lines.</p> <p>Gillian Newell – asked if the Town Clerk had investigated the possibility of applying for grants for the allotments. Councillor Ellis will follow this up with the Town Clerk.</p> <p>Neville Craggs - said that plot no 2, Isabella has been left unattended for the past 3 years. The Allotments Officer will investigate this and take appropriate action.</p>

Alan Raffell – is there a projection on the timescale for the lanes. The Allotments Officer said there is a five year plan and costings had been made public to the allotment holders.

Tony Raffell asked that if, in the short term, could the potholes be filled with chippings. Councillor Ellis said that his method has been used previously. However there appeared some confusion amongst allotment holders as they were not aware they had to fill in the holes themselves.

John Jackson – said large vehicles using the lanes are exacerbating the problems and asked if a barrier could be erected to stop this happening.

The Allotments Officer will explore both options.

Jack Gillies – asked if the Associations are disbanded how allotment holders would be able to access grants as it has to be a recognised association to be able to secure a grant.

Councillor Ellis will raise this with the Town Clerk.

Neville Craggs expressed his concern that allotment holders don't always get to hear what is happening or when meetings are taking place. The Allotments Officer confirmed that he puts up notices at all sites when a meeting is arranged. Mr Craggs asked if notices could be put on both notice boards on the Bolam site. Minutes, agendas and supporting papers are also posted on the Council website www.blythtowncouncil.org.uk

Councillor Elliott said the issue of grants was raised at the meeting in October 2015 and asked that clarification is given at the next meeting of the Allotments Committee.

Councillor Ellis will ask the Town Clerk to confirm whether an application has been made and ensure the relevant paperwork has been completed for future schemes.

Cath Newell – asked for clarification about the apportioning of water rates where a holder may have more than one site. The Allotments Officer confirmed that if someone has two allotments they will have to pay water charges on both.

Councillor J R Potts explained that the Council, when looking at the water charges, considered how much each site was using and the reasons behind it.

	<p>There was a marked difference between the sites. He added that his preference would be to keep the water charges included in the rent. The Allotments Officer supported this view.</p> <p>The Committee thanked everyone for their feedback and reiterated they welcome the views of the allotment holder. Councillor Ellis asked that comments are forwarded to the Allotments Officer by 4 March 2016 when the consultation period will close. Comments will be shared at Full Council on 17 March 2016.</p> <p>Cath Newell – asked who is included in the consultation process. Councillor Ellis said this process is an opportunity for all of the allotment holders to express their views.</p> <p>Stan Newell - queried whether there would be water charges levied on the raised flower beds as rent is not paid on them.</p> <p>Jack Gillies asked how long it will take to recoup the £1500 spend on the four allotments at Newsham.</p>
6	ANY OTHER BUSINESS FOR URGENT ATTENTION None.
6	PRIVATE BUSINESS The Committee is recommended to resolve to exclude the press and public from the remainder of this meeting under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to enable Councillors to be informed of the actions taken in respect of the particular tenancy considered at the previous meeting, involving potential consideration of an individual's circumstances.
7	Date & Time of Next Meeting Tuesday 7 June 2016, 6.30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Arms Everyne House.

MEMBERS OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Councillors:

K Ellis (Chair)
J R Potts (Vice-Chair)
C Bruce
B Elliott
R Parker
O Potts
L Rickerby
D Rutter
A Turnbull

Officers:

S E Rickitt	Town Clerk
D Clough	Allotments Officer
M Hawthorne	Committee Clerk

PART II – Confidential

Plot 53

The Committee noted that there are still concerns regarding the state of this allotment and the affect it is having on a resident. Committee acknowledged that the excessive rainfall over the winter months will have caused delays and that some improvements have been made. The Council have not acted within the agreed timescale which has now elapsed.

A detailed discussion took place to consider what the next steps will be and the Committee agreed that they have to ensure that standards are maintained.

It was agreed that the Allotments Officer will write to Mr McEwan to advise him that no further action will be taken at present, however, the improvements must continue and be sustained. The Allotments Officer will monitor the situation closely and feedback to Committee.

Subject to ratification
Final

Actions from Allotments Committee held on Tuesday 2 February 2016

Minute No	Action	Action Owner
4	Complaint from resident of Bebside House – clarification will be sought regarding whether the Council should be involved in the complaint.	Allotments Officer
4	Letter to be written to an allotment holder on Wensleydale who is not adhering to the rules regarding keeping the gate locked.	Allotments Officer
4	Stephen Danielson is awaiting a meeting with the Town Clerk and Councillor Ellis regarding the position of Blyth Smallholdings.	Councillor Ellis will speak to the Town Clerk and agree a date to meet.
5	Query from Gillian Newell regarding grant applications for allotments.	Councillor Ellis will raise this with the Town Clerk and ensure relevant paperwork has been completed for future schemes.
5	Plot 2, Isabella has been left unattended for 3 years. Further investigation required and appropriate action taken.	Allotments Officer
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request for chippings to be provided as a short term measure to improve the condition of the pathways. • Request for a barrier to be erected to stop through traffic from large vehicles 	The Allotments Officer
Part II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A letter to be sent to Mr McEwen advising him of the decision of the Council • Mr McEwan's allotment to be monitored on a regular basis 	The Allotments Officer